

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) Polyacrylic acid crosslinked cellulosic fibers subsequently treated with ~~a bleaching agent~~ hydrogen peroxide, wherein the Whiteness Index of the polyacrylic acid crosslinked fibers treated with ~~the bleaching agent~~ hydrogen peroxide increases from a first value determined at least one day after treatment of the polyacrylic acid crosslinked fibers with ~~the bleaching agent~~ hydrogen peroxide to a second value determined up to 14 days after treatment with ~~the bleaching agent~~ hydrogen peroxide.

2-4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently amended) A method for making bleached polyacrylic acid crosslinked fibers, comprising spraying ~~a bleaching agent~~ hydrogen peroxide into an air stream containing polyacrylic acid crosslinked fibers, wherein the Whiteness Index of the polyacrylic acid crosslinked fibers treated with ~~the bleaching agent~~ hydrogen peroxide increases from a first value determined at least one day after treatment of the polyacrylic acid crosslinked fibers with ~~the bleaching agent~~ hydrogen peroxide to a second value determined up to 14 days after treatment with ~~the bleaching agent~~ hydrogen peroxide.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Original) The method of Claim 6, wherein hydrogen peroxide is applied to the fibers in an amount from about 0.1 to about 20 pounds per ton fiber.

8-9. (Canceled)

10. (Currently amended) An absorbent product, comprising bleached polyacrylic acid crosslinked cellulosic fibers, wherein the bleached polyacrylic acid crosslinked cellulosic fibers

comprise polyacrylic acid crosslinked cellulosic fibers subsequently treated with ~~a bleaching agent~~ hydrogen peroxide, wherein the Whiteness Index of the polyacrylic acid crosslinked fibers treated with ~~the bleaching agent~~ hydrogen peroxide increases from a first value determined at least one day after treatment of the polyacrylic acid crosslinked fibers with ~~the bleaching agent~~ hydrogen peroxide to a second value determined up to 14 days after treatment with ~~the bleaching agent~~ hydrogen peroxide.

11. (Original) The product of Claim 10, wherein the product is a wipe, tissue, or towel.

12. (Original) The product of Claim 10, wherein the product is an infant diaper, adult incontinence product, or feminine hygiene product.

13. (Previously presented) The fibers of Claim 1 having a Whiteness Index greater than about 75.0.